

Editorial: Character, responsibility, and well-being: influences on mental health and constructive behavior patterns

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Character can be defined as self-aware knowledge that helps the individual to set goals, values, and ethical principles (Cloninger, 2004). This meta-cognitive dimension of human personality involves “Theory of Mind,” and is positively related to measures of well-being, mental health, and constructive behavior patterns. Research from at least three different fields, cultural (Shweder et al., 1997), personality (Cloninger, 2004), and social psychology (Abele and Wojciszke, 2007) suggest that character can be organized along three broad principles: agency, which is related to the autonomy and the fulfillment and enhancement of the self; communion, which is related to engagement in the protection and relations to others such as families, companies or nations; and spirituality, which is related to the human ability to transcend the self and find and interconnection with all life and appreciation of the whole world around us (Haidt, 2006; Cloninger, 2013).

Using the Temperament and Character Inventory (Cloninger et al., 1993) researchers have found that Self-directedness (i.e., agency), Cooperativeness (i.e., communion), and Self-transcendence (i.e., Spirituality) are associated to high levels of happiness, psychological well-being, and less violent behavior (Garcia et al., 2013, 2015; Nima and Garcia, 2015; Mousavi et al., 2015). Moreover, low Self-directedness and Cooperativeness is recurrent among individuals with all types of mental health problems, such as, depression, schizophrenia, anxiety disorder, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and etcetera. Self-transcendence, in coherence with Self-directedness and Cooperativeness, guides the individual to seek self-realization in harmony with others and nature in the changing world (Cloninger, 2013). Seeing character as self-awareness of the self in three dimensions has also been associated to human responsibility and empowerment (Nima et al., 2012; Schütz et al., 2013a,b; Cloninger and Garcia, 2015).

In this Research Topic researchers offer their perspective on character, responsibility, and well-being. Ruch and his colleagues, using other measures for character, offer a series of articles ranging from life satisfaction among religious people (Berthold and Ruch, 2014) to good character in school (Wagner and Ruch, 2015). Abele develops the idea of how communal values need to be pursued in agentic ways (Abele, 2014), while Garcia and his colleagues give an insight into the possible use of character-centered teams at work places (e.g., Garcia et al., 2014a) and also its etiology in adolescence (Garcia et al., 2014b). Continuing this line, Jeppsson (2014) gives a philosophical perspective on responsibility in the field of criminal justice. Finally, Moreira et al. (2015) show the importance of character and its relation to well-being during adolescence, while Nilsson (2014) gives a critical opinion of the need of

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introducing the perspective of worldview when studying the association between personality and well-being.

With this range of different takes on the interactions between character, responsibility and well-being we hope to give a new perspective on the investigation of personality's role on human health and well-being.

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